THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL PULPIT.

SERMON BY THE REV. PIERRE ALEXIS PROAL, A. M.

VOL. IV.] FEBRUARY, 1834. [NO. II.

THE LAITY FELLOW-LABORERS WITH THE MINISTRY:

A Sermon,

Delivered before the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New-York, October 3d, 1833,

BY THE REV. PIERRE ALEXIS PROAL, A. M.,

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, SCHENECTADY.

Rom. xvi. 3.—"*My helpers in* CHRIST JESUS."*

THE present is a period full of interest in the history of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Through the good providence of GOD the Zion we love has been extended and strengthened; —by the increase of her numbers; by a diminution of the prejudice which existed against her distinctive principles and policy; by a more enlightened and correct appreciation of her merits as a component part of that Church of the living GOD, declared by an inspired Apostle to be the "ground and pillar of

* This text expresses St. Paul's commendation of "Aquila and Priscilla," for having aided him in advancing the interests of CHRIST'S religion.

These persons were Jews by nation, who had resided at Rome; but being expelled from that city by an edict of the Emperor, they had taken refuge at Corinth. They were tent-makers by occupation. During the Apostle's stay at Corinth they had given him the hospitalities of their house. Hence a close and intimate friendship existed between them, terminating only with the earthly life of the Apostle. At the hazard of their own lives, they had preserved his for the service of the Churches; and they diligently co-operated with him in promoting the great interests of the religion of the cross; aiding St. Paul in his labors for CHRIST. The Apostle frequently remembers them in his salutations with particular affection and regard, and in the text styles them his "helpers in CHRIST JESUS."

truth;"* and, may I not be permitted to add? by the increase of that unity, harmony, and brotherly love, which bind us all in the strong bands of Christian fellowship.

The present circumstances of our Church, therefore, call loudly upon every individual within her fold to renewed and unwearied exertion, for the advancement of that "evangelical truth and apostolic order" so conspicuous in her ordinances, ministry, and worship.

I have long been deeply impressed with the conviction, that while it is generally conceded, that "it is not meet" for the clergy "to leave the word of GOD and serve tables;"† and while the laity of our Church are found faithful in a watchful care over its temporalities: still, from the natural tendency of the human mind to pass to extremes, the fidelity with which the sacred office of CHRIST's spiritual ambassador has been guarded from all encroachment, has led, in some degree, to the overlooking of those means by which a Christian laity may become fellow-laborers with the Christian ministry in hastening the happy period, when, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."‡

The general and particular duties of the clergy have been frequently enforced, on occasions similar to the present, with eloquence and ability; often by one§ whose voice was never heard among us but with feelings of the highest veneration and delight. On an occasion when, through their immediate representatives, we may be considered as addressing the entire body of the laity of our Church, it has occurred to me that I could not more profitably occupy your time than by calling your attention to some of the means by which the laity may become the "helpers in CHRIST JESUS" to the clergy in the noble work of advancing pure and undefiled religion.

Under the full persuasion that Christian people are under indispensable obligations to co-operate with their pastors in the work of furthering the Gospel of CHRIST to its completion, I

---

* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Acts vi. 2. ‡ Isa. xi. 9. § Bishop Hobart.

ask your pious attention to the several points which I propose as the heads of the following discourse.

I. A Christian laity may aid their pastors in diffusing the influence of pure and undefiled religion, by *a devout and constant attendance upon public worship.*

The ministry is a divine institution. It was ordained of GOD for the evangelizing of the world; and these divinely commissioned heralds of the cross are "the messengers of the LORD,"—"ambassadors for CHRIST,"*—"stewards of the mysteries of GOD,"†—they "watch for your souls as they who must give account,"‡—they plead with you for CHRIST's sake to become reconciled to GOD in the exercise of true repentance and a living faith. But how can they discharge the momentous duties involved in their high commission, if the people of their cure will not wait on their ministry? What will it avail, though the truths which are "able to make you wise unto everlasting salvation,"§ be inculcated with all the fervent zeal of a Paul, or the impassioned eloquence of an Apollos, if addressed to those who regard the preaching of the word with cold indifference, or contemn it by neglect? How often, indeed, must the faithful pastor mourn that he labors in vain in regard to that portion of his flock who habitually or frequently absent themselves from the sanctuary, or are unmoved by its heart-stirring services!

Every obligation that can influence rational and accountable beings, enforces the duty of devout attendance upon public worship. Thus only can we show to the community, in which we live, our esteem and value for CHRIST's religion. It is thus that we most effectually promote the cause of good order and religion, by the *example* of deep reverence for the institutions of our holy faith; the influence of which will be more particularly felt in our families, exhibiting to our children and all around us, our deep conviction of the infinite importance, and divine origin and excellence of this heavenly institution. Nor, brethren, will its effects upon yourselves be less beneficial. You are immortal

---

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † 1 Cor. iv. 1. ‡ Heb. xiii. 17. § 2 Tim. iii. 15.

beings, whose destinies in eternity are conditioned upon a due improvement of the present probationary existence. The Gospel of JESUS CHRIST exhibits the only way of salvation for lost and guilty man, for his "is the only name given among men, whereby we must be saved."* Vain, therefore, is the fancy which imagines that a divinely constituted priesthood is not essential to the furtherance of the Gospel. Never would the divine head of his Church have burdened his spiritual body with the care and support of a standing ministry, could the world have been converted simply by means of circulating His holy word, unattended by commissioned messengers to administer its ordinances, and receive mankind into covenant with GOD,—to explain its doctrines,—enforce its precepts,—and press home to the conscience its sanctifying truths. In the *establishment* of the ministerial order, *by* CHRIST *himself*, we have sufficient assurance of its *necessity;* and in the unfailing promise of his abiding presence to the end of time, we have demonstration of its *perpetuity*. If, therefore, wo awaits the clergy if they preach not the everlasting Gospel of the blessed JESUS, what must be the portion of those who will not hear the word we are commanded to preach? I pray you then, brethren, dearly beloved in the LORD, be constant and devout in your attendance on the worship of the sanctuary; for thus, you aid the ministry by encouraging the attendance of your own households and all who will be influenced by your example. Moreover, it is thus you animate your pastor, elevating his spirits, and giving ardor to his zeal, by inspiring him with the earnest hope of success in winning souls to CHRIST. And although, from superior advantages, your own souls stand less in need of his aid or counsel in strengthening you for your spiritual conflicts: though your Christian attainments raise you above such means of edification as he can furnish, yet are there claims upon your devout and constant attendance on the services of the Church, growing out of your duty to join with your lips and your hearts in the public worship of your GOD

* Acts iv. 12.

and Saviour; and to contribute to the efficacy of the word and ordinances, dispensed by an apostolic priesthood, among your families, and those within the circle of your influence, who may not be superior to religious instruction, however humble, or however simple. Yes, fellow Christians, the faithful pastor ardently longs for the salvation of his people,—that CHRIST may be formed in them of a truth,—that they may grow up in all things like unto CHRIST, who is the head of his body the Church. By your steadfast and devout attendance on divine worship you aid the advancement of these stupendous objects: in this particular, within your allotted sphere, you help to roll on to its completion the great work of evangelizing the world; and in this respect, as far as in you lieth, you become to the ministers of CHRIST's Church their "helpers in CHRIST JESUS."

II. A second mode in which a Christian laity may aid the clergy, and become their "helpers in CHRIST JESUS," is that of *bringing their children to them for catechetical instruction.*

In this way, my brethren, can you effectually second our labors. If parents are indifferent to the ministry, and the divine instruction they are specially commissioned to deliver, youth will very naturally regard it as a useless invention; and rather treat it as a matter of unconcern, than as a mean of grace and salvation. If the laity would only consider, for a moment, the solemn obligations involved in their parental relation and responsibility,—that their children are a gift and heritage from GOD,—that like themselves they are immortal beings, who are to be trained here on earth, and rendered meet for the kingdom of heaven,—and as such, are talents intrusted to the parent's care for the master's use, and for the cultivation of which he will be called to render a strict account. If these considerations were duly weighed, Christian parents would arouse from their lethargy, and be up and doing for the spiritual necessities of their charge.

In reference to secular learning and worldly occupations, you feel it your bounden duty to provide and secure to your children proper and sufficient instruction. If this be obligatory in respect

to earthly things, how much more weighty the trust of fitting them for their celestial calling? Christian Parents! at the sacred font of regeneration you have solemnly dedicated your children to the service of GOD. Through His authorized ambassador they have been admitted to be GOD's "children by adoption and grace;" received as members of the Church, the body and the spouse of the Redeemer, and fellow-heirs with CHRIST. Looking forward to the high destinies of so holy a calling, are you not under the most solemn obligations to train them up in the ways of piety and religion; in the nurture and admonition of the LORD; that by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, transforming and renewing their hearts, they may be rendered meet for admission, through the alone merits of a divine Saviour, into the communion of the Church triumphant?

Moreover, correct principles are essential to correct practice; and if we would that our children should be useful and honored in life, and after death be admitted to glory, it is of the highest importance that their minds be stored with the principles of piety and virtue in early youth. And, Christian brethren, if you have any regard for the evangelical institutions of the Church,—if she has secured your own attachment, because of the soundness of her doctrine, the purity and fervor of her worship, and the apostolic origin of her ministry,—ought you not to feel yourselves interested in teaching your children to walk in those "old paths" which you are persuaded are leading yourselves into the way of life everlasting? Ought you not to labor diligently for their spiritual improvement, by leading them to "drink of those fountains of living waters"* which flow through the ordinances of the Church? For these have been instituted by GOD himself as the means of grace,—the pledges of his love,—the assuring symbols of his pardon and acceptance,—and the channels through which divine mercy is conveyed to the penitent and believing soul.

O then, as you value your own eternal interests,—as you

---

* Jer. ii. 13.

regard the everlasting welfare of the immortals committed to your trust, who look to you for guidance and direction, see that they are brought to your and their minister to hear the words of life, and by him be taught the truth as it is in JESUS, for their edification and salvation. These are the *lambs* of the fold which demand earnest care and unceasing vigilance, if you would have them grounded and settled in the faith; and which, unless you, their parents, become, in this matter, to the clergy "helpers in CHRIST JESUS,"—are beyond the reach of their oversight or instruction.

III. Another particular in which a Christian laity may aid the clergy, and become their "helpers in CHRIST JESUS," nearly allied to the catechetical and religious instruction of their own children, is that of *lending their personal labors in the work of the Sunday School.*

Highly important, in every point of view, are these institutions. Their effects upon the community at large, and upon teachers and scholars, are in the very chiefest degree salutary. But time and experience have so fully developed and confirmed the most sanguine anticipations of their philanthropic founders, that you need no arguments of mine to persuade you of their utility in these respects, or to enforce their claims upon your nurturing care.

Under this head I will detain you but a few moments, while I urge on you the duty of co-operating in Sunday School instruction, from its *beneficial results upon the* CHURCH.

If we regard the Church as a divine institution, ordained of GOD to be "the ground and pillar of the truth;"* and consequently a visible society distinguished by a divinely constituted priesthood, as its only lawful officers, who alone are empowered to administer its ordinances, and that union with this "Church of the living GOD" is essential to the enjoyment of a covenanted title to salvation; and if we believe that our Church in the different grades of her ministry,—in her evangelical doctrine, and her solemn and impressive worship,—possesses those characteristics which belong to the *Church universal,* and which

* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

have been transmitted to her by uninterrupted and apostolic succession from JESUS CHRIST himself, the great head of the Church, and the only source of power and authority therein; how imperious is the obligation to labor with his ministers for the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer? And, brethren, where can you find so legitimate a field for the co-operation of the laity in the work of spiritual instruction, as in the *Sunday School?* This is the nursery in which the youthful mind is to be trained to an enlightened and ardent attachment to those distinctive principles which, as integral parts of Gospel verity, constitute the excellence of the Church. This is the field wherein may be planted the seed of divine truth, which will grow up into a goodly tree, whose branches shall cover the earth, and its boughs shelter this fallen race of ours from the pestiferous blasts of heresy and schism. Yes, my fellow Christians! by your pecuniary contributions; but still more, by your personal labors and exertions in the Sunday School, may you do much,—very much,—for the Church,—for the Gospel,—for the souls of men.

O, that our laity could be awakened to a deep sense of the magnitude of this duty; that their zeal, in the cause of divine truth, could be so enlivened, that our Sunday Schools should no longer languish for lack of the pecuniary means indispensable to their success; or their usefulness to the souls of our fellow immortals, and their advantages to the Church of the Redeemer, be committed to the uncertain care of youth who need themselves to be guided and instructed! Christians, I appeal to you as philanthropists, to aid the cause of Sunday School instruction, because you thus advance the best interests of your fellow creatures. I appeal to you as *Churchmen*, to give yourselves to this work, because you thus promote the cause of divine truth. I appeal to you as parents,—as Christian parents,—who feel on your souls the solemn vows and obligations of the baptismal covenant to bring up your children "in the way in which they should go,"*—to instruct them in the "one faith"† of the Gospel,—and to induce them by all possible means "to

* Prov. xxii. 6. † Eph. iv. 5.

renounce and forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to keep GOD's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same unto their life's end."*

These are, indeed, responsible trusts, the faithful discharge of which will meet with its reward. It will be rewarded NOW in the approbation of your own consciences,—in the increase of piety and virtue, of pure and undefiled religion, and all the inestimable blessings which follow in their train. It will receive its reward HEREAFTER in the blessing of your GOD and Saviour, and the admission of your glorified bodies, re-united to their purified souls, into those mansions of eternal blessedness, purchased for the righteous by the meritorious obedience unto death of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

IV. A Christian laity may, still further, become the "helpers in CHRIST JESUS" to the clergy, as the divinely commissioned ambassadors of the LORD, by their *prayers for the success of their labors;* and by *their daily walk and conversation.*

1. Inspired Scripture warrants the belief, that "the fervent effectual prayer"† shall be heard and answered by "our Father in heaven;" and the apostles and first heralds of the cross besought the devout prayers of their pious converts. St. Paul, in various passages, entreated Christians to "*pray for him.*" And, brethren, as "ministers of CHRIST," and "stewards of the mysteries of GOD," weighty indeed is the charge committed to the clergy,—numerous the difficulties of executing it faithfully and effectually,—manifold the temptations to which they are exposed,—fearful the scrutiny they must encounter at the great day of trial,—and awful the consequences of failure both to themselves and the people of their charge! O, my GOD! I shudder when I think thereon!—"Who is sufficient for these things?"‡

Taken as are the clergy from among your brethren,—men of the same tempers, and the like passions as yourselves; though set to watch over your souls, and to guide your feet into the way of salvation, we are equally subject to the infirmities of a

---

* Office for Baptism. † James v. 16. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

weak and depraved nature as other Christians. The great and precious "treasure" committed to us, is reposed in "earthen vessels."* Hence the necessity of GOD's grace to enable us to prosecute the work, and perfect our weakness in divine strength. This grace and this strength must be sought by diligent prayer. An especial promise awaits that prayer where "two or three" unite their "common supplications" "in CHRIST's name;"† and if "the fervent effectual prayer of one righteous man availeth much," how exceedingly may a united people "help" their clergy when their petitions ascend to heaven as one voice, imploring "grace to help in time of need"‡ upon the faithful pastor's head,—to strengthen his weakness,—to enlarge his mind,—and to fill his heart with zealous and faithful longings for the salvation of the souls committed to his charge!

2. The laity, moreover, may do much, very much, to aid the diffusion of Gospel truth, by their daily walk and conversation. The precepts inculcated by the clergy they may enforce upon all within the sphere of their influence; their expostulations and exhortations may find responsive notes in the hearts of their hearers, and by these be conveyed with powerful and resistless effect in their own families, and places where the voice of the messenger of the Lord JESUS might scarcely reach. Yes, Christian Laity! when you cause "your light to shine before men, that they seeing your good works glorify your Father in heaven,"§ your *example* carries the seasonable admonitions of your pastors, where their voice might not have sounded; for it presents a standing exhortation to piety and virtue, and becomes a stern-visaged reproof to iniquity and vice.

Every individual in the community is possessed of influence within his sphere, which it is his bounden duty to exert for the cause of truth. As Churchmen, therefore, it should be your privilege, as well as your duty, to labor for the extension of the Church in its integrity,—ministry and worship and ordinances. From various causes prejudices, strong and bitter, thanks to GOD, gradually wearing away, but of long continuance, exist

---

* 2 Cor. iv. 7. † Matt. xviii. 20. ‡ Heb. iv. 16. § Matt. v. 16.

against the primitive order of our venerable Zion. As her faithful children it becomes you to labor for the eradication of these prejudices. In your *conversation* you may show your fellow Christians the heavenly purity of her doctrine, by exhibiting its strict conformity to inspired Scripture; and in your *lives* you may display the sanctifying influence of those ordinances of which her apostolic priesthood are the divinely constituted dispensers. For thus will you exhibit their power as channels of GOD'S grace and mercy, and the pledges of his pardon and love to the faithful recipient. And thus also will you be able to persuade men that the tendency of the institutions of the Church, based as they are on the appointment and word of JEHOVAH, is to promote the cause of "evangelical truth and apostolic order;" by imparting to those who imbibe the spirit of her devotions and of her doctrines, that fervent piety, and that lively faith which alone can "bring forth the fruits of the Spirit."*

Yes, Christian Laity! the barriers which prejudice and ignorance have erected around our Church to retard her advancement, are to be burst asunder by the influence of the holy lives and the godly conversations of her faithful members, who, "letting their light shine before men,"† will thus manifest, in the most forcible manner, how strictly the Church follows holy writ, insisting upon those cardinal doctrines of the Bible which convince man of *sin*,—enforce the necessity of "*true repentance*," as the fruit of a "*lively faith*" in JESUS CHRIST, the living Saviour and prevailing advocate of sinners,—teach us to rely with our entire affiance on the ONLY *merits* and *mediation* of a divine Redeemer for pardon and acceptance; and direct us to seek in the use of appointed means for the sanctifying influences of the HOLY GHOST the Comforter,—the third person in the adorable Trinity, by whom alone the carnal heart can be renovated, and the whole man transformed into the divine image and likeness; and thus rendered meet for the kingdom of heaven. When your life and conversation shall thus exhibit

* Litany. † Matt. v. 16.

the sufficiency of our Church as the way to life everlasting,—conveying, by means of her divinely constituted ordinances, those gifts and graces of which they are the legitimately appointed channels,—you will aid in extending the borders of our Zion; enlarging her palaces, strengthening her towers, securing her bulwarks, and setting up her houses:* and with these you will advance the cause of truth and piety within your allotted sphere, and thus truly and indeed become to your clergy their "helpers in CHRIST JESUS."

V. Once more. A Christian laity become the "helpers in CHRIST JESUS," to those set over them in the LORD, when *they participate "with a true penitent heart and lively faith" in the sacraments*, which the ministry, deriving its authority by uninterrupted succession from CHRIST, the head over all things to his Church, alone are commissioned and empowered to administer.

Our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST has promised to be with the ministers of apostolic succession, "alway, even unto the end of the world."† To this ministry alone gave he commandment, that they should "go and baptize all nations;"‡ that in "remembrance of him"§ they should unceasingly continue to perpetuate, in the sacred feast of the Eucharist, the memorials of his body broken, and his blood shed for the sins of the world. Having instituted these ordinances to be the means of conveying his grace and Holy Spirit to the faithful recipient, for the comfort and edification of his people; and having appointed an order of men whose duty it is to administer these ordinances, doubtless it must be incumbent on the people of their charge to draw near with faith, and participate in these divine appointments to their great and endless comfort.‖

Moreover, how delightfully interesting, as well as solemn and impressive, to behold parents approaching the altar to have their children dedicated to GOD,—commended to his care, guidance, and protection; and by the sacred ordinance of

---

* Psalm xlviii. 11, 12. † Matt. xxviii. 20. ‡ Ib. 19. § Luke xxii. 19.
‖ Exhortation in Office for Holy Communion.

baptism have them initiated into the Christian covenant, whereby they become "members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven!"* How salutary the influence of this devotion of their children, upon the parents themselves; awakening them to a deep sense of the responsibilities involved in their parental relation, binding them to teach these immortals to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; to believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and to keep GOD's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life." Christian parents! weighty are your obligations; and whence can you derive help to fulfil them, but by a humble, faithful, and devout application to your heavenly Parent, "the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift," whose grace has never been sought in vain? Therefore, you are to commend yourselves and little ones to Him in "a sober, righteous, and godly life."

A mean thereto is to come yourselves, and when of sufficient age and knowledge, to bring your children to the highest ecclesiastical officer, the Bishop of the Church,—to "renew the solemn promise and vow that ye and they made, or that was made in your and their name at baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then undertook, or your sponsors then undertook for you;" beseeching ALMIGHTY GOD to "defend you with his heavenly grace, that you may continue his for ever, and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more until you come unto His everlasting kingdom."†

Nor are you to stop here. If you desire GOD's fatherly hand to be ever over you,—his Holy Spirit to be ever with you, to lead you to the knowledge and obedience of His word, that in the end you may obtain everlasting life, you must seek it, by coming with diligent prayer and devout self-examination to the *Supper of the* LORD.

The dying command of your Saviour enjoins you to "do this in remembrance of"‡ him. An inspired Apostle assures us

---

* Church Catechism. † Confirmation Office. ‡ Luke xxii. 19.

of the perpetual obligation of this sacrament, instituted by our Redeemer when he was about to make expiation for the sins of the whole world by his own most precious blood-shedding, when he declares, that "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the LORD's death *till he come*."* This then is the fountain from whence we are to drink of living waters springing up unto eternal life; for it is the language of the Son of GOD himself, "Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."† Why, then, are the rich bounties of this sacred feast,—the rich banquet of CHRIST's flesh and blood so often displayed in vain before unwilling hearts? In these holy pledges we eat the bread that lives beyond the tomb,—we slake our spiritual thirst at those streams in which salvation flows; for they are the channels which convey to the penitent believer in JESUS the assurance of pardon and mercy; the pledge of love divine; and the renovating aids of the strengthening Spirit.

But, my brethren, aside from these Christian obligations,—rather derived from the benefits flowing to yourselves in the use of the means of grace, than the aid which this application to divine ordinances brings with it to your clergy,—in an age when infidelity and irreligion, misrule and disorder, are calling into active exercise their utmost powers to corrupt mankind, and overwhelm civil order and good morals in a chaos of confusion and impiety; our country and our liberties; every temporal privilege and enjoyment we hold dear; unite with our holy faith, and call with a warning voice upon every patriot and every philanthropist, to array himself under the banner of the cross of the Redeemer, and declare himself an open advocate and the avowed supporter of CHRIST's holy religion, to which we are supremely indebted for all our civil and all our religious privileges and enjoyments. They call on him no longer to be cold or lukewarm in the cause of piety and virtue; no longer to "halt between two opinions;"‡ but manfully to take his stand, and profess himself CHRIST's faithful

---

* 1 Cor. xi. 26. † John vi. 50. ‡ 1 Kings xviii. 21.

follower and servant, by renewing from time to time his covenant engagements at the altar of his God and Saviour.

VI. Finally. A Christian laity may become very efficient "helpers in Christ Jesus" to their clergy, by *active exertions in forming and carrying into successful operation the various societies for promoting Christianity*, or *one general association embracing their several objects.*

These institutions, while they characterize, also adorn and ennoble the present period of the world, and are most important means of strengthening the stakes and lengthening out the cords of our Zion; and should form a part of the regular operations of every parish in our country.

1. Missionary and education societies, as aids in answering the earnest calls for the ministry and worship of our Church; furnishing laborers to enter on the work of reaping the "fields already white unto the harvest;"* and enabling pious young men to avail themselves of the high advantages which our invaluable Theological Seminary furnishes to attain those acquirements which will fit them forcibly to explain, eloquently to defend, and successfully to inculcate the truths of religion, present urgent claims upon your unceasing and vigorous efforts for their organization in every parish.

2. Bible and Common Prayer Book Societies, as the instruments of widely circulating the Bible, as the revealed will and word of Jehovah; and after the apostolic pattern, extensively exhibiting in connexion with that word, the Church of God, as displayed in our evangelical book of Common Prayer, loudly call upon the laity for their active co-operation in this highly important charity. By the gratuitous distribution of the Prayer Book among those members of our Church who are unable to purchase, these societies are the means, under God, of great good. But they are so still more, by the extensive circulation of this approved formulary of devotion among those who are, and would otherwise remain, unacquainted with the pious fervor of its responsive and animating service; and its scriptural views of the Gospel scheme of redemption by Christ Jesus. Pre-

* John iv. 35.

judices against our Communion are thus softened, if not removed; and not unfrequently these prejudices are made to give place to a warm attachment to it. I but speak the experience of most, if not all, of my reverend brethren, the clergy, when I state that many of the flourishing congregations of our country owe their origin, under GOD, to a seasonable and judicious distribution of the book of Common Prayer. Doubtless your own experience can bear testimony to the truth, that not a few are the individuals who are indebted for their first serious impressions, or the confirmation of their pious principles and hopes to a faithful and devout use of the Prayer Book, with which they had not been acquainted, until placed in their hands by the charity of these associations.

3. Societies for the distribution of tracts, exhibiting views in accordance with the evangelical sentiments of our Church, and explaining her distinctive principles and institutions, present manifest means of diffusing Gospel truth. I should scarcely have felt it necessary to call your attention to their importance, but for the inadequate support and encouragement extended to the society instituted in this city, having this object in view. Tracts from its depository have been distributed to the full measure of its ability, to parishes and missionary stations within and without the diocese, while a very few have returned a feeble tribute into its wasted treasury.

It was remarked on this subject, and in this place, by one whose memory we all love to cherish, and whose principles we are ambitious to emulate and to follow, that "on the subject of diffusing religious knowledge by tracts, one would think there would be no difference of opinion or of measures among us. A union here with our Christian brethren, who differ from us, must inevitably, to say the least, endanger our religious system, either by circulating sentiments in dissonance with its distinctive principles, or by keeping them out of view in a general association of commanding influence, lead to the belief common among ourselves, that they are of little importance."* Christian charity is not opposed to Christian truth; and is best maintained

* Bishop Hobart's Address to Convention, 1826.

by associations among ourselves, and exclusively under the guardianship and authority of our own Church.

It is by societies such as these, my fellow Christians, organized and efficiently prosecuted in every parish of our diocese, that a Christian laity have invaluable means in their own hands for furthering on the Gospel to its completion of filling the earth. True, there is danger—and to my mind it appears the leading tendency of the present day—of overlooking the fact, that the Christian Church is the only society ordained and instituted of GOD, as the divinely appointed instrument for evangelizing the world. Associations resting on mere human appointment, though highly useful and important as auxiliaries, yet based, as they are, solely on the sanction of human authority as measures of human wisdom and policy, are nevertheless in no degree capable of occupying the place, much less of superseding, that visible society of which GOD is the founder; his eternal SON, the head and Saviour, having purchased it by his precious blood-shedding; and the blessed SPIRIT its daily strength, and support, and sanctification. These societies, however, when carried on in subserviency to the grand distinguishing principle of connecting the Church and the word of GOD,—uniting the sacred volume with the ministry; the worship and the ordinances which that word enjoins as of divine institution; and the instruments it puts forth for diffusing and sustaining Gospel truth:—in a word, when wholly and exclusively used as the agents of CHRIST's mystical body, the Church, under its guardianship and in submission to its authority, fall peculiarly under the care and patronage of the laity, as in a measure connected with the temporalities of the Church. They demand the devotion of time and talents and influence, as well as wealth, to their pious objects; and by concentrating the united efforts of every parish, and calling into active exercise the enlightened and cheerful benevolence of every parishioner, accumulate an aggregate of pecuniary means which will enable the Church to carry on the work of converting the nations to a degree of which it is impossible to estimate the results. If

Episcopalians could be persuaded to enter upon some plan of systematic benevolence, laying by in store on the Lord's day, as an inspired apostle has left us in charge, or at other convenient and stated periods, a portion of their earthly gains, according as GOD has blessed them, to the cause and service of his Church;—if every individual, I say, connected with our Church, either as a pew-holder, or regular attendant upon its services, would conscientiously and cheerfully discharge this duty according to his ability, how vast the increase of good that would flow from this united effort in these objects of Christian philanthropy!

Yes, my brethren, if the laity of our Church would become deeply interested, as they ought to be interested, in these associations, as auxiliary to the Church itself; and would lend themselves wealth, and time, and talents, and influence, to the work as a sphere of usefulness peculiar to their order, how soon would the Church of the Redeemer put on her beautiful garments as the bride and spouse of CHRIST, her divine head, and thus sooner be prepared for the coming of her LORD!

And where is the believer in CHRIST's Gospel who can look around upon this world of ours, a large portion of which lies wrapped in the gross darkness of heathenism, and yet refuse his aid in conveying to his fellow immortals, thus benighted, the cheering, invigorating, and sanctifying rays which are diffused by the light of Gospel truth? Where is the Christian mother, who realizes the rank in the scale of being and of society to which her sex has been exalted by the Gospel of the Son of GOD; the controlling influence she is enabled to exercise over our race, by having the rising generation so unreservedly intrusted to her guidance:—and, on the other hand, contemplate the wretchedness and degradation sitting over the female of every other system of religion but the Christian; led on by a blind idolatry to sacrifice the fruit of her body for the sin of her soul; or by a horrid superstition persuaded to follow a self-immolated victim on the funeral pyre, the corpse of her deceased partner; and yet withhold her influence, grudge her means, or

restrain her exertions in the cause of Bible truth,—to convey to earth's remotest ends the inestimable blessings of that liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free?

But, alas! how often is it that those golden streams, which ought to enrich the treasury of the Church, are made to flow through other channels, to the cause of institutions, which, if not adverse to her interests, are nevertheless beyond her control! From the peculiar circumstances of our Church, it must ever be that she has most urgent claims upon the entire charitable contributions of her members. While other Christian communities, from identity of interests and similarity of views, may extend their application through a wider range, and receive aid from more numerous donors, the Church can look for support to institutions devoted to her exclusive interests only from the members of her own communion. She is constrained to rely wholly upon the resources within her own pale for the advancement of her distinctive institutions and her evangelical services. The separation involved in the present divisions among the professors of our common Christianity, can only be defended on the ground that the differences which keep them asunder are essential to the integrity of Gospel truth. So long, therefore, as it continues the duty of the Christian "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints,"* it will be obligatory upon Episcopalians zealously to support, and unweariedly to labor for the extension of those distinctive principles of their Church which so endear her to their best affections, and so eminently entitle her to a primitive and apostolic character.

And, my fellow Christians, what sufficient reason can be given for neglecting her institutions, or bestowing on other associations that zeal, or those pecuniary means for which her urgent need so eloquently pleads, and which her evangelical purity so eminently deserves? This direction of your pious liberality from *general* objects to the necessities of your own household of faith, until the wants of that household be sup-

* Jude 3.

plied,—bestowing your contributions, surrendering your time, exerting your influence, and devoting your talents to the Missionary and Education Associations, the Bible and Prayer Book and Tract Societies, and other institutions, exclusively under the control of your own Church, is in no wise contrary to the spirit and design of CHRIST's Gospel, or the precepts of his apostles. It does not frustrate any system, nor oppose any principle of sound and enlightened benevolence; nor does it in any sense lessen the obligation to extend in their highest purity the Gospel of the Church of CHRIST.

No, brethren, again to use the energetic language of our late diocesan, an ever lamented prelate,—"In promoting the extension of this pure branch of the Church of the Redeemer, you will best advance the glory of GOD and the salvation of men; and faithful to the lessons of evangelical truth which our Church inculcates, you will save your own souls, while you contribute your part in the most exalted work of benevolence, the salvation of the souls of your fellow-men;"* and then it is that you become in a peculiar manner the "helpers in CHRIST JESUS" to your clergy.

My Brethren of the Clergy, I have already trespassed so long on your time that I must solicit your indulgence for a few moments longer, while, in unfeigned humility and a deep sense of my own insufficiency, I proceed to offer, in a few words chiefly derived from the Ordination services, thoughts designed merely to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."†

If it be the duty of a Christian laity to become *our* "helpers in CHRIST JESUS," so is it likewise obligatory upon us to become "fellow-laborers" and "workers together" with our bishop, as the chief shepherd and pastor, on whom daily falls the care of all the Churches, by a zealous and faithful discharge of the duties pertaining to the clerical office. Fearful, indeed, are our responsibilities; for we are to "give our faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of CHRIST, as the LORD hath commanded, that we

* Bishop Hobart's Address, Convention of 1818, p. 22. † 2 Peter iii. 1.

may teach the people of our cure and charge with all fidelity to keep and observe the same. We must be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to GOD's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick, as the whole within our cure. To be diligent in prayers and in reading the holy Scriptures, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh; and also in framing and fashioning our own selves and our families according to the doctrine of CHRIST, that they, as well as we, as much as lieth in us may become wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of CHRIST."

O, how much,—how very much,—do we need the heavenly grace and blessing of our most merciful FATHER and GOD, that we may be clothed with righteousness; and that His word, spoken by our mouths, may have such success that it may never be spoken in vain; and that in all our words and deeds we may seek his glory and the increase of his kingdom through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

My Reverend Brethren,* about to be admitted to the order of priesthood, and the respected person about to be ordained deacon,† these thoughts should come home to your hearts on the present occasion with fearful solemnity. The transaction of this day, in which you are to renew the vow that binds you to the service of your GOD and Saviour; and in which, at the sacred altar, you are to assume higher responsibilities corresponding with the "good degree"‡ which is to be secured to you, will materially affect your interests in eternity. According as you are found faithful, it will seal you very high exaltation in the kingdom above; or, dread alternative! become the means of your everlasting condemnation. How much does it behoove you, therefore, to give all diligence in "following after righteousness, godliness, faith, charity, and peace." For "the servant of the LORD must not strive; but be gentle unto all

---

* The Rev. Thomas Meachem and the Rev. Thomas Clark.

† David Griffiths. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 13.

men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves."* "War, therefore, a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience;"† "enduring hardness as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST."‡ "Neglect not§ the truth committed to you." "Study to show yourselves approved unto GOD; workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."‖ You are to "meditate" in the sacred Scriptures,—to "give yourselves wholly" to the work of the ministry, "that your profiting may appear unto all men;"—to "take heed unto yourselves and unto your doctrine, continuing in them, for in so doing you shall both save yourselves and them that hear you."¶

"I charge you, therefore, before GOD and the Lord JESUS CHRIST, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom:—preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine:"** that at the end of your conflict, having "fought a good fight, finished your course, and kept the faith, there may be laid up for you a crown of righteousness which the LORD, the righteous Judge, shall give you at that day; and not to you only, but unto all them that love his appearing."††

My Brethren of the Clergy and the Laity, let us all unite with one heart to advance the cause of CHRIST's Church and his holy religion; encouraging each other, and all within the sphere of our influence, to turn unto the LORD; to come up unto his house, that they may learn his ways and walk in his paths. Thus will the Zion on earth resemble the beautiful order and purity of the Zion above, the city of the heavenly King. Thus will the pious members of the Church militant be admitted hereafter, in the world to come, into the Church triumphant, of which the earthly sanctuary is but the type. And thus will the house of GOD, the Church on earth, be indeed the gate of heaven, opening through the merits of a divine REDEEMER, and

---

* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. † 1 Tim. i. 18, 19. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 3.
§ 1 Tim. iv. 14. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 15. ¶ 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16.
** 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. †† 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

the sanctifying influences of the eternal COMFORTER, free access into the city of GOD the Father.

To whom, three divine persons, in the unity of one only eternal Godhead, be ascribed, by the Church militant on earth, and by the Church triumphant in heaven, all honor, power, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever!—Amen.

HYMN.

GREAT LORD of all thy churches, hear
Thy ministers' and people's prayer;
Perfumed by thee, O may it rise
Like fragrant incense to the skies.

May every pastor from above
Be new inspired with zeal and love
To watch thy flock, thy flock to feed,
And sow with care the precious seed.

Revive thy churches with thy grace,
Heal all our breaches, grant us peace;
Rouse us from sloth, our hearts inflame
With ardent zeal for JESUS' name.

May young and old thy word receive,
Dead sinners hear thy voice and live,
The wounded conscience healing find,
And joy refresh each drooping mind.

May aged saints, matured with grace,
Abound in fruits of holiness;
And when transplanted to the skies,
May younger in their stead arise.

Thus we our suppliant voices raise,
And weeping, sow the seed of praise,
In humble hope that thou wilt hear
Thy ministers' and people's prayer.

HYMN.

What contradictions meet,
In ministers' employ!
It is a bitter sweet,
A sorrow full of joy:
No other post affords a place
For equal honor or disgrace!

Who can describe the pain
Which faithful preachers feel,
Constrain'd to preach in vain
To hearts as hard as steel!
Or, who can tell the pleasures felt,
When stubborn hearts begin to melt!

The Saviour's dying love,
The soul's amazing worth,
Their utmost efforts move,
And draw their bowels forth:
They pray and strive, their rest departs,
Till Christ be form'd in sinners' hearts.

If some small hope appear,
They still are not content;
But with a jealous fear
They watch for the event:
Too oft they find their hopes deceived,
Then how their inmost souls are grieved.

But when their pains succeed,
And from the tender blade
The ripening ears proceed,
Their toils are overpaid:
No harvest joy can equal theirs,
To find the fruit of all their cares.